



File Code: 1950

Date: May 17, 2010

Dear Friend of the Ashley National Forest:

An original scoping letter for the Dry Fork Flume Trail Reroute and Trailhead Project was sent out on September 29, 2008. Upon further analysis, I decided to analyze the trail reroute and trailhead as two separate projects. I issued a Decision Memo for the trail reroute last month. The trailhead will be analyzed separately and would require a Forest Plan amendment if implemented (see more detailed information in *Forest Plan Amendment* section below).

Due to the need for a Forest Plan amendment in conjunction with a decision to implement the trailhead project, we are now providing you with an additional opportunity to comment on the trailhead proposal. This letter provides you with a review of the purpose of and need for the trailhead, details of the proposed action and associated Forest Plan amendment, an overview of the expected level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation, and information on how and where to submit your comments regarding this proposal.

### **Purpose and Need**

The Ashley National Forest Dry Fork Flume Trail is the most popular non-motorized trail located on the Vernal Ranger District. Its popularity is largely due to its close proximity to Vernal and easy access along the Red Cloud Loop Scenic Backway. The trail starts on Bureau of Land Management administered lands, parallels Dry Fork Creek for several miles, and terminates on the Ashley National Forest where it connects to the Sink Ridge Trail near Horseshoe Park. The trail is very scenic as it provides vistas of the Dry Fork and Brownie drainages, is towered by Sawtooth Ridge, and winds through multiple plant communities from 7,500 feet to 9,500 feet in elevation.

Presently, there are several areas that visitors use to access the Flume Trail and all are showing signs of user-created impacts. There is no official designated trailhead for the Flume Trail on the Forest. This means that users often pull off the road and utilize user-created trailheads. This practice poses a safety concern for vehicle traffic on the road, as well as trail users, because the user-created staging areas are unmarked, often exceed capacity, and create hazards when road space is used for parking. Construction of an official trailhead would eliminate various management problems and improve the safety of trail users and motorists along the Red Cloud Loop Road.

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed trailhead location has historically been used as a dispersed camping area and is adjacent to the Flume Trail approximately ¼ mile north of the Forest boundary on the southwest side of the road (SLM, T. 2 S., R. 19 E., Sec. 36, SE ¼; 40°35'55" N, 109°43'56" W, NAD83). The use of this area for dispersed camping has posed management issues due to resource damage and associated camping impacts (litter, fire rings, camping on the trail, target shooting, etc.) and



the location was closed to overnight camping use with the release of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Forest's Motorized Travel Plan in September 2009.

The trailhead proposal includes clearing and hardening a parking area of approximately ½ acre in size to accommodate suitable vehicle and trailer traffic and constructing/installing a restroom facility, barriers, benches, gate, and a kiosk/information board and other appropriate signing. A map showing the proposed location is attached. The site would be accessed year-round and would be shared in the winter by cross-country skiers utilizing the non-motorized Flume Trail and snowmobilers who would be parking to access the groomed Red Cloud Loop Road winter snowmobile route.

### **Forest Plan Amendment**

The proposed action would require a Forest Plan amendment. The current (1986) Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) has a standard/guideline for management areas f and n that states: "Allow no developed recreation sites in the Dry Fork Drainage".

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance**

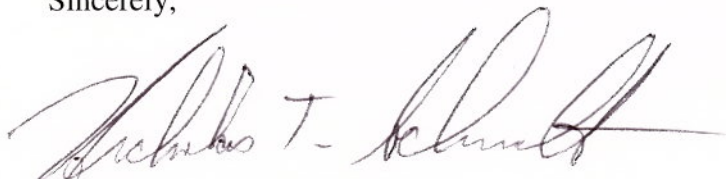
We are currently planning on completing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for this proposed action. At this time, no alternatives to the proposed action have been identified.

### **Public Involvement**

We are accepting public comments on this proposal. Comments will be accepted for 30 days following publication (expected on Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>) of the legal notice of this proposal in the *Vernal Express*. This comment period provides those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official.

Written comments must be submitted to: Nicholas T. Schmelter, District Ranger, Vernal Ranger District, 355 N. Vernal Ave., Vernal, UT 84078. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 to 4:30, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must contain "Dry Fork Flume Trailhead" in the subject line and must be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc), Portable Document Format (.pdf), or Rich Text Format (.rtf) to [comments-intermtn-ashley@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-ashley@fs.fed.us). If you have any questions about the proposal, please contact Lesley Tullis, Acting Recreation Manager, at 435-781-5137 ([ltullis@fs.fed.us](mailto:ltullis@fs.fed.us)).

Sincerely,



NICHOLAS T. SCHMELTER  
District Ranger  
Vernal Ranger District



# Proposed Dry Fork Flume Trailhead

Ashley National Forest  
Vernal Ranger District



1:100,000

